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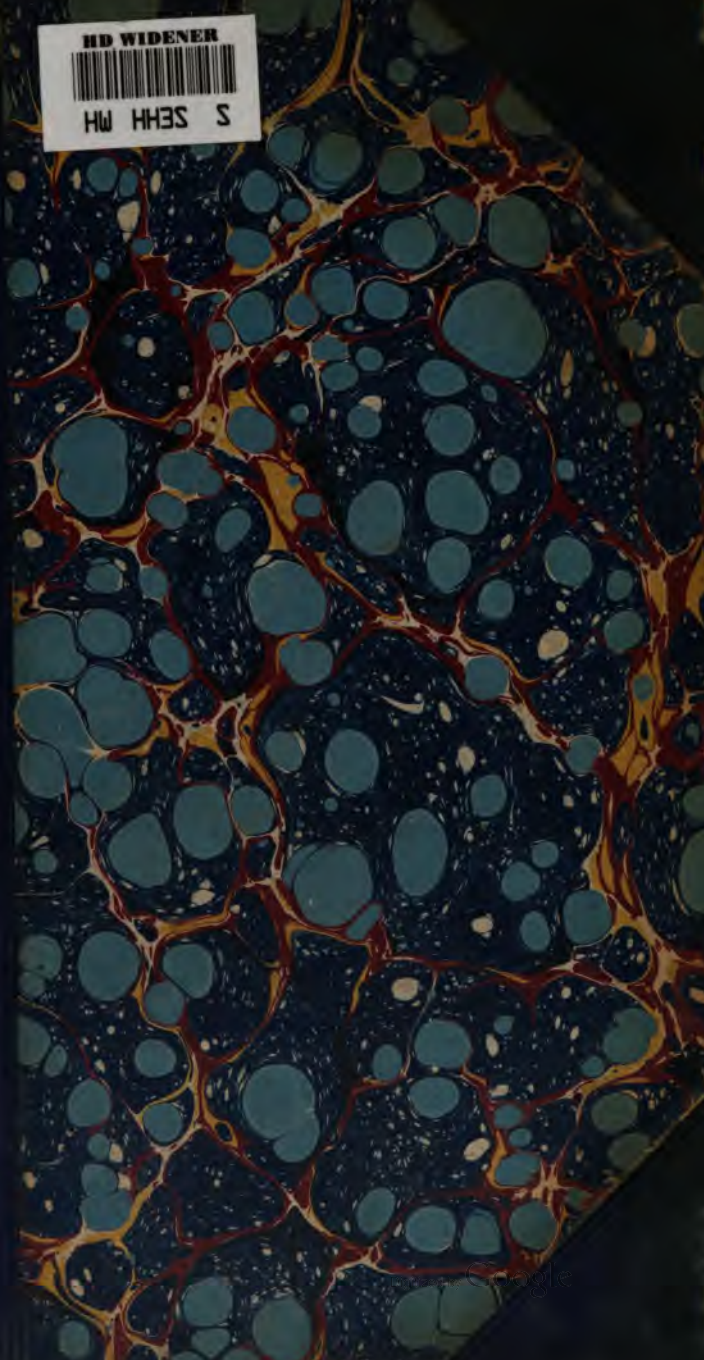
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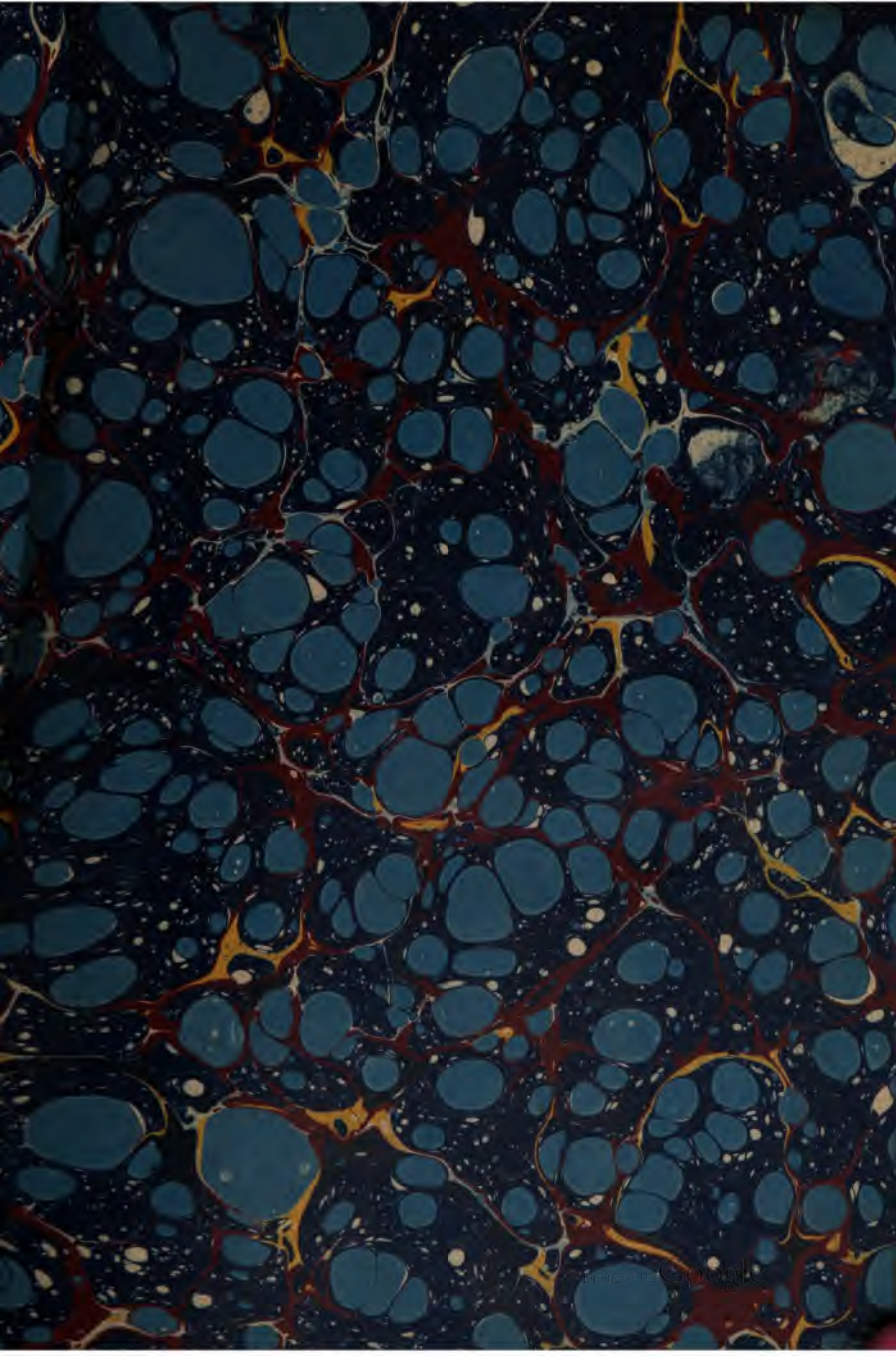
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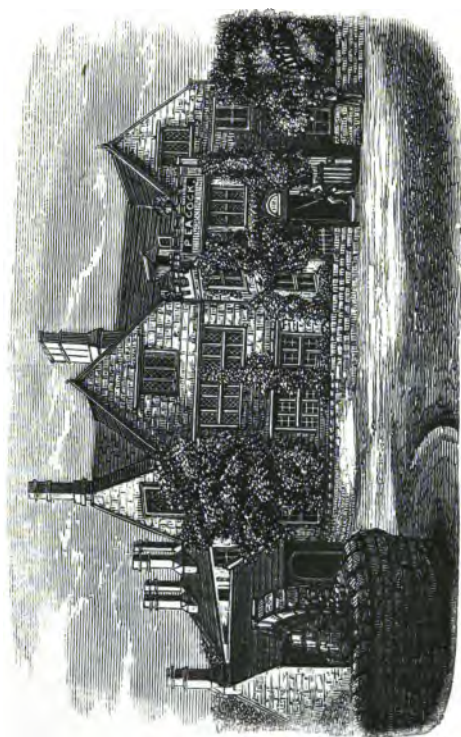
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THE PEACOCK AT ROWSLEY.

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THE
PEACOCK AT ROWSLEY:

WHERE ANDREW, ALEXIS,
AND THE NATURALIST MET; AND WHAT
CAME OF THEIR VISIT:

BY
JOHN JOSEPH BRIGGS, F.R.S.L.

me
LONDON:

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P R E F A C E.

SOME years ago, when on a trip through the Peak of Derbyshire, it was our good fortune to halt for a short season at the "Peacock," and we were so much struck with the quaint character of the house itself, the picturesque nature of the scenery around it, and the many interesting objects, and associations of the district, that we determined to make it the scene of a series of papers. Bringing several persons of different tastes, pursuits, habits, and modes of thought together, we made them discourse to each other upon their favourite topics, and occasionally making allusion to places, objects, and circumstances in the neighbourhood. These papers appeared originally in the *Field*, and apparently created considerable interest, judging by the repeated requests which have been made to us to re-print them in a collected form. We now comply with that request. Of the Peacock itself, it seems necessary to give a few particulars, and we cannot do better than quote

the following, which appeared about ten years ago in the columns of the *Illustrated London News*:—

“There is nothing, perhaps that more enhances the pleasure of travelling to an Englishman than meeting with good and comfortable accommodation at the various hotels he may visit; and, though great has been the outcry against hotel keepers generally—for they are nearly always looked upon as grim ogres who will most certainly eat up either your purse or your person—still there are exceptions to the rule, where every comfort is to be had, and where even invalids may rest quietly for the night without fear of their malady being increased by the sight of the *bill* in the morning.

“The accompanying Engraving of the Peacock at Rowsley lays before our readers the *beau idéal* of a snug country hostelry. It was our lot to be travelling through Derbyshire a few days ago, when fortune brought us under the shade of its roof. Who has not heard of the Peacock? Its fame seemed on inquiry, to have spread through the length of the land; but, as it had not been a portion of our luck to call there and enjoy its calm repose before, we thought that some portion of our readers might not be the less grateful to us for calling their attention to it, especially if they should be in that part of the country. The inn reminded us forcibly of the wayside inns mentioned in Sir Walter Scott’s novels, built in the Elizabethan style, with abundance of windows, filled with heavy stone mullions, surmounted with gables and battlements. It requires no stretch of imagination to carry us a century or two back, and view over the door the sign of the “Bear and Ragged Staff,” or a troop of Leicester’s mounted retainers quaffing ale and cracking jokes with the landlord. When inside, such a snug and cosy feeling comes over one, produced by the unscrupulous attention to our creature comforts, that, gazing at the old beams forming the ceiling, with our feet brought within the rays of the glowing fire which ever and anon blazes forth and dies away, leaving us in momentary darkness, we almost forget that we are creatures of to-day, and should scarcely start did a damsel clad in ancient garb appear with venison pasty and clouted cream from the buttery.

“Rowsley is a small hamlet situated at the junction of the Wye and the

Derwent, both of which streams afford much gratification to the disciples of Isaak Walton, who may be seen dotted about on the bank, following their piscatorial pursuits, and who make the Peacock their head-quarters.

“Rowsley is seven miles from Matlock Bath, and three miles from Bakewell. It is the terminus* of the railway from Ambergate, whence run coaches to Buxton, Manchester, &c. In these days of steam it is a refreshing sight to see the old-fashioned coach-and-four rolling along—to hear the wind of the horn as it nears its destination, contrasting with the shrill whistle of the engine, which seems like an intruder in that peaceful valley, where formerly the only sounds were the song of the shepherd, or here and there the soft ripple of the stream, whose course, at intervals impeded by craggy fragments, forms fresh beauties to delight the eye. But these are not all the attractions of Rowsley. Within three miles is Chatsworth, the “Palace of the Peak,” with all its beauties of natural scenery and modern art. Here may be seen the germ of the Crystal Palace, and the hand and genius of Paxton visible at each turning—its waterfalls, its fountains, its towers, and varied walls all testify to the liberality and taste of its princely owner and the skill of the designer. Of the house and its contents little need be said, for the costliness and beauty of the gems contained in it are too well known.

“From this point the tourist should retrace his steps, and half way between Rowsley and Bakewell he will find Haddon Hall, one of the most interesting of baronial ruins remaining in this country, situated on the side of a hill, sheltered from the north wind, imbedded in the richest foliage, and with the busy babbling Wye running close under its battlements, it forms a picture to be seen only to be appreciated. On entering the building and closing the wicket a bygone age bursts upon the visitor. The rude porter’s lodge and bedstead on which the retainer last slept—the chaplain’s apartments—the chapel (part of which is of the 12th century)—the courtyard, all vividly and forcibly carry us to the time when the Baron issued forth attended by his suite to enjoy the sports of the field. Passing through the first court we come to the dining-hall, with raised dais and table—the only distinguishing mark between master and servant. In immediate proximity are the kitchens

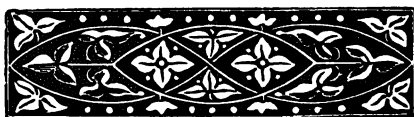
* Formerly it *was* the terminus, but now the line is carried forward to Manchester.

and larders, all looking as if the domestics had only retired for a short time. We then come to the dining, drawing, and ball rooms, all clean and dry, as when abandoned as a human habitation; and, as we paced along this latter room with polished floor, the hollow sounds of one's footsteps led us to the contemplation of the time when the gay Elizabeth, surrounded by her Court, honoured the Vernons with her presence, and made the room echo with the shouts of merry laughter. A long day may be spent in wandering about the gardens, terraces, and shady walks; the door is pointed out to us through which eloped Di Vernon and her faithful lover: which route they took is left to the visitor's imagination; perchance they crossed the remarkable stone foot-bridge. Suffice it to say the escape was perfected, and adds additional interest to the romantic ruins of Haddon Hall.

"It was now time to wend by the wandering banks of the river, to our old friend the Peacock, which accords so well in its outer garb, with Haddon Hall, that it adds to making the illusion complete; and, as the time arrives for our leaving, we look back with a sigh as one of the connecting links between a bygone age of chivalry, and the present time fades from our view.

"HYEMS."





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THE PEACOCK AT ROWSLEY:

WHERE ANDREW, ALEXIS, AND THE NATURALIST
MET; AND WHAT CAME OF THEIR VISIT.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING—CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE MAYFLY—
“EPHEMERA”—THE TOWN OF ASHBORNE—THE SCULPTORS
CHANTREY AND BANKS—THE POET “TOM MOORE.”

T was a bright May morning in the year 1858, that three friends, bent upon enjoying a holiday, arrived per train at the little village of Rowsley, in the Peak of Derbyshire. Whether their ultimate object was a trip to see the glories of Chatsworth, the grand old towers of Haddon, or, “last but not least,” Mr. Bateman’s unrivalled collection of British antiquities at Yougholgreave, deponent sayeth not. Their names, too, it matters little to record; suffice it to say that the first was a painter, whom we shall call Alexis; the second a poet, Andrew; and the third a Naturalist. Being in the midst of the paradise of anglers, with the Derwent flowing on the one hand, the Wye on the other, and almost within a stone’s

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throw of the sparkling Lathkil and the romantic Bradford, what was so natural as that their thoughts should turn upon fish? and what fish was the locality so likely to suggest as the lovely grayling?

Now it must be noted that this same Peacock is one of the most pleasant, agreeable little inns in England, and where, as with its neighbour, the Rutland Arms at Bake-well, the tourist and angler may meet with everything they may desire. When the three friends were comfortably located in one of its quaint old rooms, their thoughts naturally turned upon appeasing "the wolf;" and, the bell being rung, in stepped a fair *grisette*, and awaited a question.

"What can we have for dinner?" asked Alexis.

"Chicken, mutton, salmon," answered the fair waiting-maid.

"Or trout or grayling, I presume," said Alexis.

"No, sir," said the maiden modestly, "we have no trout or grayling; the fish are feeding on the bottom."

"Feeding on the bottom? What do you mean?"

"Why, sir, feeding on the grub at the bottom of the river, before it turns to the fly. The fish are now very difficult to take."

"Well! that will do," said Alexis; and the maid departed.

The words "feeding on the bottom" were evidently far from satisfactory to the inquiring mind of Alexis, who, thinking that, although the maid might inherit "her mother's beauty and her father's pride," did not possess the entomological knowledge of a Newman or a Curtis, turned quietly to his friend, and said, "What think you of the maid's definition, Mr. Naturalist? Does the fly ever feed upon the bottom?"

"Certainly, *in one state*," said the Naturalist, "but not as a fly."

"As what, then?"

"Why, a worm or grub."

"Can you tell me anything of its history?" said Alexis.

"Rather an obscure subject, and one upon all points of which we of the *genus* Naturalist are not agreed; but perhaps I can tell you something of interest."

"Proceed, my friend."

"Well, then, you must know that insects in general undergo several transformations—usually three. The moth lays an egg; the egg becomes a caterpillar, the caterpillar a chrysalis, and the chrysalis again becomes a moth. The Mayfly undergoes a process somewhat, but not precisely, similar. You will have noticed in brooks and outlets, more particularly towards spring, several kinds of a creature called 'the strawbait,' or 'caddis worm,' small creeping things encased in a kind of husk formed of bits of straws, small shells, and grit, and glued as it were together, which coats the insect's body with a mail of considerable strength. These insects have commonly been supposed to be the larvæ of the Mayfly, but further research has shown that they are in reality those of caddis-flies, which entomologists call *Phryganidæ*. The grub of the Mayfly is a different creature. A friend of mine kept one for some time, and found him an interesting object under the microscope. I will describe it more minutely at a future period. In this state the fish are particularly partial to them. The Mayflies in this particular state then inhabit the bottoms of streams, and the fish feed upon them. They are then what is called 'feeding on the bottom.'"

"But," exclaimed Alexis, "I want to know by what method or process the grub becomes a fly."

"Wait, and I will explain. The grub is, as I have said, the Mayfly in one state. These grubs, or larvæ as they are called, exist in the water for years—some say two, others three—and then, towards the month of May, sooner or later, according to circumstances, come forth as those elegant flies called the Mayfly or green drake, with light gauzy wings and long tail, which fly in such numbers about the Peak streams, now rising, now falling, in gentle flight, and then perchance settling, 'light as a rose leaf,' upon the surface, and becoming the delicious prey of the keen-eyed fish. A few hours before the flies appear on the wing they are denizens of the water, being then in what is called the 'pupa,' or third stage of existence, a state, in fact, in which may be observed certain parts of the grub, with certain appearances of the perfect insect. They leave the river in this state, making their way to the surface of the stream, and then, casting their skin, proceed as well as they can, to the banks of the river; and settling for a time on the flags, stumps, or stones, seem waiting, as it were, to gain that strength which is sufficient to fit them for their new sphere of existence. When remaining in such positions, they again cast a second delicate covering which had encased them, and which is frequently found adhering to the objects on which the insect rested when it was cast off."

"Wonderful transformation!" said Alexis. "Then, it appears, the creature is at one time a grub, at another a fly; at one time aquatic, at another ærial; now being the companion of the creeping things in the bed of a river, then changing its nature, and roaming with the bee and the butterfly through the fields of air."

"Yes!" said the Naturalist, "it is indeed wonderful. Men incur expense, undergo fatigue, endure privation, in anticipation of meeting with new objects to excite admiration, whilst they neglect to investigate the history of that world of wonders which is ever above, beneath, and around them. Yes! the transformation of insects is wonderful, and will appear even more so, if what some naturalists have supposed to be correct, that in the grub state exist at the same time *three animals*, one within another, all nourished by the same digestion and a communicating circulation, but in different stages of maturity; that the grub is, in fact, a prospective contrivance of the most curious kind, in which exist *organizations three deep*, yet having a vascular system supplying nutrition, life, and growth to all of them."

"Come, come, Naturalist, you are quite enthusiastic; no, Paley, if you please; let us keep to the point. How long does the Mayfly exist in the grub state, and how long in that of the fly."

"In comparison with the former, the latter is very short. In the water probably it lives two years, in the air not many hours. Entomologists indeed, on account of its short life in the latter, have called it 'Ephemera,' or the 'day-fly,' or 'short-lived fly.'"

"Yes!" said Andrew, "Westby Gibson, the poet, when describing the shortness of man's life, calls it 'just a May-fly's flight.'"

"'Ephemera!'" observed Alexis, "that name is familiar to me. Why, I remember some writer adopting it when treating upon the salmon."

"Certainly," said the Naturalist. "It was the same *nom de plume* of a writer in *Bell's Life* who treated upon fishes and fishing. His name, I believe, was Fitzgibbon."

"A good writer too," remarked Andrew. "I remember his articles on salmon well—a man evidently clever with the pen as with the fly. Do you know anything about him, Naturalist?"

"Not much, although he resided in Derbyshire for some time at the little town of Ashborne. He devoted the greater part of his time to the investigation of the habits of fishes and the best methods of taking them. For fifteen years he wrote for *Bell's Life*. His remarks upon grayling are excellent. He wrote also the 'Handbook of Angling,' and the 'Book of the Salmon;' but the best production was an edition of dear old Isaac, published by Ingram and Cooke. His notes are replete with information. Fitzgibbon died in 1857. When staying at Ashborne, in conjunction with Mr. Shipley (who keeps, or did keep a fishing-tackle shop) he wrote 'Shipley's or Shipley and Fitzgibbon's Fly-fishing,' which was published by Richardson, of Derby."

"Naturalist, were you ever at Ashborne?"

"*Certes*, a lovely little town, and independently of its being situated in the classic land of Walton and Cotton, to me it has innumerable charms."

"Why?" inquired Andrew.

"First of all, then, it has a pretty church with a pretty spire, and I love church architecture; and that church contains a monument by Banks to a little child. Such an exquisite production! I could linger over it for hours, charmed with its surpassing loveliness. Chantrey stole silently into the church to study and admire it, and the result of his visit was the production of the 'sleeping children' in Lichfield Cathedral. It is certainly the *chef-d'œuvre* of Banks. A little child, feverish and uneasy, rests upon

a mattress, her head reclining upon a pillow, Her name was Miss Boothby; and the inscription tells, 'that she was in form and intellect most exquisite.' If Ashborne contained nothing but this monument, it were worth much travel to see a gem worthy of its setting. But it was whilst listening to its sweet church chimes that the poet Moore composed his melody, 'Those Evening Bells.' He resided near Ashborne some time, in a little cottage at Hanging Bridge, in which he wrote the greater part of 'Lalla Rookh;' so that amidst the cold and desolate Peak, was written a work tinged with the warmth, and teeming with all the splendour and gorgeousness of the East."

"By-the-bye, Naturalist, I heard a capital story of Moore the other day. I know it to be a fact. It is very characteristic of the poet, and not even hinted at by Lord John Russell. Some time before Moore 'awoke and found himself famous,' he lived at a village called Kegworth, in Leicestershire, in order to be near Donington Park, the seat of his great friend and patron, the Marquis of Hastings. Being a new resident in the place, applications were made to him by the various tradesmen to solicit his custom, and one morning a butcher made his appearance to receive his orders. Now, the poet knew more about the composition of a lyric than the structure of a cow, and when the butcher asked him 'What part shall I send you, sir?' was sorely puzzled, but having heard of a quarter of lamb, and not liking to appear ignorant of common matters, said, hastily, 'Well, send *me a quarter of beef.*' 'Fore or hind?' said the butcher. 'Hind,' said the poet, and accordingly half a cart-load of beef was soon at the poet's door. His surprise at receiving the mountain of flesh may be imagined, and he

found himself on an alp of difficulty from which he had some trouble to extricate himself."

"Your poets, Andrew—your poets are a curious race. Come, let us to dinner. It is already upon the table. Naturalist, you shall preside."

"With all my heart. Salmon, Alexis."

"Thanks !"

"And you too, Andrew !"

"No ! give me mutton, and 'Orton's Surrey Sauce.'"





CHAPTER II.

THE THREE FRIENDS AT DINNER—THEIR CONVERSATION ;
“FIREFLY” AND “PORTIA”—LADIES’ BONNETS—“PRO-
VERBIAL PHILOSOPHY”—THE COMMON TOAD—COMPENSA-
TIONS IN NATURE—THE GARDEN AT THE PEACOCK—OLD
COACHING DAYS, &c.

WHEN we last left the three friends—Andrew, Alexis, and the Naturalist—they were quietly seated in the little room at the Peacock, enjoying their mutton and old port ; and we now again find them in the same delightful position. Dinner being over, the bottle passed quietly round, and the Naturalist, powerfully refreshed by its strength, became somewhat more animated in spirit, and smartly remarked, “Come Alec, give us a toast.”

“Nay, my dear friend, do not ask me to perform that duty, which, as president of our little party, we have a right to expect from you.”

“Well, then,” said the Naturalist, “we all read *The Field*—we all admire the productions of its lady contributors. Here’s a bumper to ‘Firefly’ and ‘Portia !’”

“‘Choicely good,’ as old Walton would say ; and long may they continue to delight us with their charming pens.

Better spend their time in amusing their fellow creatures, than on crinoline and cockleshell.' ”

“ ‘Cockleshell?’ Andrew, ‘Cockleshell?’ ”

“ Bonnet ! Nat. ; bonnet ! ”

“ You might have said nautilus,” remarked the Naturalist, “ the bonnet of your modern belle is quite as elegant—much prettier than the French ‘Olivia.’ Did you ever see Barry Brake’s ‘Sonnet on the Bonnet,’ Alec? Do repeat it, Andrew?”

“ With pleasure,” said the poet.

“ Here’s a tipsy little sonnet, on a jaunty little bonnet,
 With a myrtle wreath upon it, that I saw at church to-day ;
 With a wreath of curls below, in many a golden ringlet flowing,
 On the lightest breeze out-blowing, in wavy wildering play :
 ’Twas a sweet bewitching face in it, with wondrous charming grace
 in it,
 And not the faintest trace in it—of anything unpleasant :
 Pale the forehead was and fair, under two soft waves of hair,
 Not too high, and not too square, just arched like a crescent :
 The brown eyes that shone below it, were as bright as dream of
 poet,
 (Ah ! I’m half afraid they know it, by their merry glancing wiles !)
 Cheeks with rose and lily blended, mouth like Cupid’s bow un-
 bended,
 Or like dewy tulips rendered, when it parted in her smiles:
 All within that little bonnet,
 With the myrtle wreath upon it.”

“ Rather good for poetry,” chimed in Alexis, at the end of the reading ; “ but I hate poetry. This is not a poetical age, it is a matter-of-fact age, an age of the Railway, Crystal Palace, and the Electric Telegraph.”

“ Aye, and of poetry too,” said Andrew ; “ What number of copies think you has been sold of ‘Proverbial Philoso-

phy?' I tell you privately; half a million in America, and eighty thousand in England."

"You astonish me; but, come, Nat., tell us something about birds, beasts, or reptiles.

"Better for man,
Were he and Nature more familiar friends."

So says Alexander Smith; that is all the poetry I know. Did you see your character sketched by 'Philo,' Nat.? He says that you are at home in the water and out of the water; an animated diary of nature's doings, a zoological registrar-general; the chronicler of the births, deaths, and marriages, occurring in the world of animated nature."

"Ah! he is not the first who has said hard things of me. But what shall I treat of? That *toad* which is crawling past the window?"

"What a wretch!" said Alexis, "an ugly wretch!"

"No, no!" said Nat, "call not anything ugly which bears the impress of being the creation of Omnipotence. There is a beauty in his very ugliness. There is a pretty story connected with that dirty-looking coat of his."

"Then tell it us, Nat. Tell us all about the creature."

"It is a long story."

"Well! tell it to us from beginning to end."

"Then I will commence with the reptile's skin," said the Naturalist. "We frequently find in creation what are called beautiful provisions of nature. Animals, for instance, as the wild deer or the hare, which are timid, are fleet of foot. They are enabled to escape danger by the superiority of their speed. Other animals are so constituted as to be in some measure shielded from danger by the very dress they

wear ; and for this reason, that the colour of it harmonises so admirably with that of the haunts which they frequent, that detection by their enemies becomes somewhat difficult. Thus, the plumage of the ptarmigan is white in winter, like the snow upon the mountain top, which it inhabits ; that of the partridge is brown, assimilating with the colour of the stubble ; the water-rail, with withered vegetation ; the snipe, with aquatic plants. The mountain-hare is not unlike the mossy rock in summer and hoar frost in autumn ; and what is more natural than to suppose that the toad's dirty coat is given to it in order that, unperceived by its enemies, it may quietly procure its food on the soil upon which it crawls ? There is another little feature connected with it—the toad periodically casts it. ‘Indeed !’ you will exclaim, ‘if so, why is the skin never found ? Who ever found a toad's skin ?’ Nevertheless it is perfectly true. At the period when the animal wishes to cast its skin, the body becomes agitated, and every now and then is seen a slight twitching motion of the limbs. The skin appears to become loose on the hinder parts of the animal, and the fore part of it is gradually pulled into the mouth and swallowed. A toad, in the act of casting his skin, strongly reminds the observer of a railway ‘navvy’ pulling his loose jacket over his head. The new skin is much lighter than the old one. The process of shedding the skin is but the work of four or five minutes. There does not exist throughout creation a more remarkable instance of suitability of bodily construction for the work which it has to perform, than in the toad. Take only one portion of its body, viz., the tongue. It is a most admirable piece of mechanism. We frequently find in nature what may be called ‘compensation.’ We see in the

construction of the toad, this, to a remarkable extent. I will endeavour to explain. There are two creatures of widely different orders of being, of form, habits, and capability. Both feed upon living insects. These are the *bird* called the common swallow, and the *reptile* called the common toad. The first is fleet of wing, active, and lively; it can hawk through the air with the rapidity of an arrow. The second is slow of motion, inactive, and confines its operations to the surface of the earth. Yet one can just as easily capture its prey as the other. Here 'compensation' steps in. The want of speed is compensated by a beautiful contrivance. How many such there are in nature! Would that we were better acquainted with the living wonders around our homesteads, that we could gather more freely the harvest of knowledge that lies at our feet! Would that we could taste more freely of the rill that rises on the hills about our homes; there is untold pleasure in the draught: the supply is exhaustless! But to return. The swallow flies after and captures insects *on the wing*: she is enabled to accomplish her end by the possession of a speed superior to the speed of that of the object pursued. The toad, on the contrary, captures his when *they alight upon an object*, but not entirely at rest. Placing himself near the leaf of a plant or other objects upon which insects are likely to alight, the toad *waits quietly* for his prey. His tongue is so made that, when not required to be used, it doubles back upon itself, like the blade of a penknife upon the haft. As soon as the insect alights upon the leaf and slightly moves, the tongue is darted out with inconceivable swiftness, touches the insect (a mucous secretion causing it to adhere), and is thus drawn into the mouth and swallowed. The tongue is very fine,

and it requires close attention to see it perform the operation. It will be best observed by procuring a common frog, whose mode of capturing insects is very similar to that of the toad. A small turf should be put upon a shallow dish half filled with water, the frog put into the dish, and the whole covered over with wire-work. Catch some house flies or other insects, insert them through the wires, and you will see the frog catch them in as eager a manner as a cat would a mouse. The reptile may be rather shy at first, and perhaps not take its food ; but a little time will habituate it to its state of confinement, and the operation of its tongue may then be readily observed. During the summer the toad is abroad in gardens, fields, and paddocks, retiring by day and coming out to feed towards night. When the insects upon which the toad feeds die off, of course it would die too, but Torpidity steps in and says—"I will preserve you." Instinct teaches the reptile at that period to search out the hole in a wall, a tree root, or other retreat ; and, retiring to this, it remains in a half dormant, sluggish state until the return of spring. The toad will sometimes make a hole in the soil. In the garden of a gentleman of my acquaintance is one of these reptiles, which, on a sheltered border, has excavated for himself a kind of alcove in the soil about seven or eight inches long, in the which he passes the winter, and to which he retires during the nights of summer."

"But, Nat., how are reptiles produced? alive, or born from an egg, or how?"

"The reproduction of reptiles is one of the most interesting portions of their history, but most difficult to describe in a popular manner. The way in which toads are produced is similar to the same operation in a frog. The eggs are

laid in the spring in some ditch or stagnant pool, and appear to the uninitiated eye to be simply a string, perhaps three feet in length, of little jellied substances. If these be narrowly examined, they will be found dotted with small dark specks, which are in reality the young toads in embryo. From this stage to that of the perfect toad the reptile undergoes several transformations, some of them exceedingly curious. About three weeks after the eggs are deposited (the period, however, being longer or shorter according to the temperature of the season), the young toads are hatched, and are the little beings known by most people by the name of 'tadpoles.' Some time after the tadpole has burst from the membrane of the egg, the mouth and eyes become visible. By and by the hind legs are seen, then the fore legs. The tail—which in the tadpole state had been exceedingly useful in swimming—becomes gradually invisible. It does not, however, as some persons imagine, 'drop off,' but becomes absorbed into the system. The young toads are frequently met with on land, about the edges of pools, before the absorption has taken place. When the tail is absorbed, the reptile is perfect. Nature now teaches him that the earth is his proper abode, and, leaving the water's edge, he ventures upon it, a very small object. The young occasionally leave their breeding-ponds in such numbers, and cover the ground so thickly, that ordinary observers may well imagine them to have been rained from the heavens. These young toads frequently venture on land the first week in July. I was going to use the expression that 'the toad breathes through its skin.' This is scarcely correct; but certainly there is a connection between the skin and the lungs by means of branches from the pulmonary

arteries, enabling the former to operate in a salutary manner upon the blood of the reptile."

"Is the toad venomous, Nat.?"

"That is a feature to which I was going to advert. Even in Shakspeare's time, and long afterwards, it was supposed to be *venomous*. That poet says:—

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

I have little doubt in my own mind that in those days the clear, glistening eye of the toad was mistaken for a jewel; although an ancient writer asserts that the belief then existing was that in the head of the reptile was a genuine jewel, which before its death was sucked up, 'mankind being grudged the good thereof.' However erroneous this idea was, there really was some ground for the supposition that the reptile was venomous. About five or six years ago two philosophers, named MM. Gratiolet and S. Cloëz, of French extraction, made several experiments in endeavouring to elucidate this subject. The result at which they arrived was, that the skin of the toad contained a secretion fraught with poisonous qualities. A goldfinch and tortoise, when inoculated by the gentlemen referred to, died from the effects. This poison is alkaline in character. MM. Gratiolet and S. Cloëz stated their intention of pursuing the subject still further, and it was expected that their experiments would be very valuable to science; but I have not been able to ascertain the result."

"What does the toad live upon, Nat.?"

"Chiefly insects. It is remarkably fond of ants. Gardeners sometimes take advantage of this habit, and insert a

live toad within the melon and cucumber frames infested with these insects, and they soon clear them of the annoyance. It will also take worms."

"I like your account much," said Alexis. "I have often seen the awkward animal dawdling about as if he were too idle to set one foot before the other. I always thought him a very vagabond of beasts, but now I see he has some useful qualities, and also some interest attached to his history. He will rise in my estimation accordingly, and I shall treat him with more respect than I have hitherto done."

"Right," said Andrew, "right :

'They are all the meanest things that are :
As free to live and to enjoy that life
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in His sovereign wisdom made them all.'

Nat., I like this house. How sweetly the river winds in gentle sweep round the garden wall ; then, careless and free, frisks through the bridge like a child at play, and making as much wild music. It is a pleasant spot. Watch the lights and shadows on yon hills ; how the light recedes and then advances, like waves upon a shore. How profusely have the rain-drops jewelled the shrubs ! The lady-flowers have put on their pearls. The garden is most trim and pleasant withal, and the walks, winding hither and thither, lead you to shady spots, whence the eye catches glimpses of romantic scenery. What is that noise, Alexis, like the rattle of wheels ?"

"Oh ! 'tis only the coach driven by Burdett, whom all the country know on this side Manchester. A crack ' whip,' I assure you, as ever handled the ribbons, and one of the

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most polite and intelligent of men. The coach passes the Peacock on its way to Bakewell."

"Days of the past," said the Naturalist, "how the sound awakens sweet recollections of your delights; then, amidst the wild scenery of the Peak, no railway-whistle roused the plover from her nest with a scream more shrill than her own: then, the golden eagle nestled on Axe Edge, and, as you rolled along, you beheld him sweeping with majestic wing over the summits of the hills, or settling upon some prominent crag, proud and noble in his bearing, looking a very monarch of earth as well as a monarch of air. I like this place, Alexis; I shall stay a week."

"And I, Nat., and go to Chatsworth and Haddon."

"And I, too," observed Andrew. "Farewell; I retire to bed, and shall think over our pleasant chat."

"Yes!" said Naturalist, laughing, "and dream of Edith."





CHAPTER III.

MORNING—THE MONTH OF MAY—LINES ON “SPRING”—
GENIUS AND INDUSTRY—THE LESSER CELANDINE AND
SPEEDWELL—DORMOUSE—HOUSE MARTIN, ETC.—“SINGING
BIRDS”—CHATTERTON THE POET.

MORNING arose with a smile on her cheek, and a beam in her eye; and with the early dawn also rose Andrew, who, loving the freshness and beauty of the morning, stole quietly into the Peacock garden, and there, in a quiet nook, sat with folded arms admiring the loveliness of the flowers, and listening to the melody of birds. Thoughtfully he sat for a long period, but at last drew paper and pencil from his pocket, and engaged himself in writing with great rapidity. His movements were not unobserved; for Naturalist (also an early riser) eyed the student from his window, but, knowing his poetical tendencies, did not interrupt him. At last paper and pencil were put aside, and he began to walk about, evidently enjoying the beauty of the scene. “’Tis a sweet month, this month of May!” soliloquised he. “How freshly the south breeze kisses one’s cheek, freighted with the incense of flowers; and the bleating of flocks come pleasantly from distant fields! May has the softness of Spring blended with

the radiance of summer. She awakens long-lost sounds from bird and insect. She opens the gate for the approach of summer, and decorates the woods and fields in honour of her visit."

"Yes! she does 'decorate the woods and fields,' and inspire the poets to sing of their beauties!" said Naturalist, who, having observed Andrew alone, had stolen quietly up to join him. "Andrew! show me that poem of yours which you have just been writing. I know you have been writing a poem."

"Nothing of note, Nat., I assure you. I have only been revising some lines which I scribbled, suggested by the loveliness of an April morning. You are no harsh critic, Nat., so here they are :—

ON SPRING.

' With dainty foot now modest Spring appears,
Wearing the pendant snowdrop at her ears ;
Flinging at random over field and wold
The early celandine's small coins of gold.
The sun rests on the stream; he makes the hills
Bloom, as with sheen of countless daffodils.
See now the fern from her brown covert stealing,
The winter leaves her bosom half concealing,
See the blue speedwell blow, and on the air
Hark to the notes of woodlark trilling there.
Each wintry thing hath life; how blithe and free
The graceful squirrel springs from tree to tree!
And the red dormouse quits his nest of leaves.
The martin builds and twitters 'neath our eaves:
Mark how the little bird comes day by day,
And hour by hour, and brings each pea of clay.
'Tis very small, yet added to the rest
It soon builds up her fabric of a nest.

May we not take a lesson? Though the bird
 Be but a bird, is there not something heard
 To cheer our hearts in her mere artless twitter—
 This precept written on her clay and litter?
 Genius may be true ore—it may be thine;
 But what avails it, buried in the mine?
 'Tis not the mere possession, but the use
 That gives it value;—then remember Bruce
 And Spider; how her thread on thread
 The insect threw, till to the beam one sped.
 Though nineteen times her utmost effort failed
 Before the task, her courage never quailed;
 Past efforts were forgot, labours unheeded—
 She threw her twentieth thread, and then succeeded.
 So Robert Bruce from her took the good hint:
 He saw the choicest medal in Life's mint
 Was perseverance. Then no more he thought
 Of all his perils past: his battles fought
 And lost; forgetting Fortune's frown,
 He made one effort more, and won his crown.
 Genius her jewels to the mind may bring,
 But Perseverance sets them in the ring.
 The axe is sharp, but how without the grip
 Can e'er it scatter round the flying chip?
 Give it the stroke, firm, trusty, straight, and free,
 Grasp it with willing hand, and soon 'twill fell the tree.'

And now how do you like them?"

"Good," remarked the Naturalist. "Some of the similes and imagery are pretty, and the sentiments are healthy. Those on Perseverance I like the best. Depend upon it, Andrew, genius is but a mere stone without that great alchemist, to turn it into gold. Periander wrote, 'Everything to industry;' but if I might be allowed to differ from the great Grecian sage, I should say, 'Everything to Per-

severance.' Upon the shield of exertion let that motto be inscribed, and success is certain. I rather like the spirit which animated John Allen when he wrote—

'Breast, then, the labour, brave the hard beginning ;
That only won with toil is worth the winning.'

In the opening lines of your little poem, Andrew, you allude to the lesser celandine. 'Tis a sweet flower ! I love to see it in the early spring, when the world is not sufficiently aired for other flowers to peep forth, dotting the fresh green grass like drops of gold. And the speedwell, too, you mention—the germander speedwell, I presume—which shows its beautiful blue clusters on the hedgerow banks. You have a touch of nature in you, Andrew."

"Yes," said the poet ; "but I love the poetry of nature. It gives me pleasure to watch the opening blooms—to see the birds winging hither and thither—to hear the grasshopper trilling out his notes on some dry bank on a hot summer's day, and so on ; but I know little, really, of the habits and haunts of animated beings. The dormouse, for instance ; I alluded to it, but beyond the fact of its lying dormant in winter, I am ignorant of its history."

"Yes," said Naturalist, "it does lie dormant. About November it builds a snug dormitory of leaves and moss, and often lines it with the needle-shaped leaves of the larch, into which it creeps and sleeps away the colder months. In spring it again awakes, comes out of its nest, and sports about the trees."

"I thought this was their habit, Nat. ; I remember poor Tom Hood, in his poem of 'Miss Gilmanseg and her Golden Leg,' very quaintly introduces the dormouse to illustrate his

sentiments. He likens its deep winter sleep to the untroubled rest of childhood. These are his words—

‘But a child that bids the world “Good night”
In downright earnest, and cuts it quite,
A cherub no art can copy—
’Tis a perfect picture to see him lie,
As if he had *supped on dormouse pie*
(An ancient classical dish, by-the-bye),
With a sauce of syrup of poppy.’

Nat., I have mentioned the martin in my poem. He comes every year as regularly as the cuckoo, and builds his nest just at the corner of my bedroom window, and begins to twitter every summer morning long before sunrise. I mean, Nat., that little swallow with black coat and white waistcoat, trousers and neckcloth.”

“A sweet pretty bird, Andrew; I know him well—the house martin (*Hirundo arctica*) of modern authors. Few sights are more pleasing than to see him building his nest underneath the eaves of a house, or in the corner of a window. Many persons call him ‘the swallow,’ but that bird never builds in such situations, but usually in a chimney or on the beam of an outhouse. The nest is built of mud; and I remember one that was built by both birds in twelve days, and weighed, when damp, sixteen ounces. The birds brought to it small pellets just as you have observed, and the perseverance and industry which they manifested were remarkable. It is very evident to me, Andrew, that in constructing their nest, the martins use some glutinous saliva to make it stick together, or else they have some peculiar method of mixing the clay; for I procured some clay which they were using for their nest, but had great difficulty in

making it stick to a wall; it would stick for a short time, and then drop off. Yet the nests of martins last for years, and serve for successive broods. The frosts of winter fail to act upon them as upon ordinary clay; the latter they pulverise and reduce to powder, but after the severest frosts these nests remain intact, or require but little patching year by year. I know, perhaps, a dozen at the present time, which must be seven or eight years old, and yet they are still firm and compact as when first they were built. And what a charming sight it is, Andrew, to one who 'sees good in everything,' to find how regularly these martins frequent their old nests in spring. They have spent the winter, perhaps, amongst the palm groves of Africa, and more than 2,000 miles from the little home in which they reared their family last year. Yet, crossing the broad Atlantic, to say nothing of hills and rocks, and streams beside, they again visit it to lay their eggs, rear their young, and then lead them, as autumn appears, to summer climes. Have you never seen them, Andrew, on their first arrival, seeking their old nests? How they wing to and from them, perch on the outside—examine them in—then fly away to recruit themselves upon the innumerable flies which are winging about? How they visit them again and again, clean out the rubbish which the interior contains, then dot a little patch of mud here and there on the exterior crust, and all the time holding a kind of friendly twitting, which might be taken for a conversation about the nature and extent of the repairs which were necessary to be made?"

"Nat., you say that this bird goes to Africa for the winter; how does it find its way there? It has no chart, no magnet, and how does it sustain itself whilst crossing the sea? It

cannot be always on the wing. And suppose, for instance, that just at the time when it ought to depart, it should have a nest of young ones, would it stay longer and take care of them, or would it desert its progeny and go?"

"With reference to your first question, Andrew, it is a well-known fact that martins do go to Africa; but how they obtain a knowledge of the geographical position of the country to which they journey, is one of those marvels for which it is difficult to account. The little salmon, for instance, who has never been to the sea in his life, will find his way down to it, and remain there for some time, and then, when he chooses, run again up the river down which he went, to the spot where he was born—aye, a hundred miles, Andrew. And the bee, too, he will leave his hive, and visit the distant heath, or the avenue of flowering lime trees, or the gay parterre; he will wing his way in and out of a thousand flowers, until you would think that whilst engaged in rifling their sweets and journeying hither and thither, he would lose all recollection of the track to his hive. How does he find his way back? All these several creatures are directed by an instinct implanted within them by Him who alone is omniscient; and what is the exact nature and character of that instinct, to my thinking, must ever remain a mystery, except to ONE. Then, with reference to the manner in which the martins sustain themselves whilst on their passage over the sea, it may be noted that, living upon insects, they hawk for them as they proceed, and occasionally rest themselves after their labours upon the rigging of ships. I have heard more than one sailor say that at particular seasons, swallows and martins have come by hundreds, and covered the ropes and clustered upon the

shrouds, and sometimes a few would fall upon the deck dead, exhausted from long flight. And in answer to your last question, I have to say that martins sometimes leave their young when they migrate, and that others remain after all their fellows have departed and rear their young and take them with them to sunnier lands. An affecting incident came to my knowledge last autumn. When the martins left my own parish, a particular pair had a nest and young ones against a stable wall, and remained behind. The duties of nidification kept the pair very late in the year, at least a month after the others had left. The female was very assiduous, but a severe frost occurring, one night she was starved to death sitting upon her young. The male was not seen afterwards, and either perished or wended his way to other climes. But here comes Alexis!"

"Appeared at last," said Andrew. Morpheus hath held thee rather tightly. It is now eight, and Nat. and I have been up these three hours."

"Give me the men that sleep o' nights. Come to breakfast," said Alexis; "I am hungry."

"And I too; give me some coffee."

"Not too fast, Andrew. Remember what Walpole—Horace, I mean—said of your poets, 'that singing birds should not be too well fed.'"

"Of whom said he it?"

"The marvellous boy that perished in his pride."

"Coxcomb!" said Andrew.



CHAPTER IV.

THE TRIP TO CHATSWORTH—GIPSIES—SWALLOWS—CONVERSATIONS ABOUT VIRGIL AND CLAUDIAN—ANECDOTES OF SCHOOL-DAYS—THE GREATER SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

IN accordance with the agreement of the previous evening, Andrew, Alexis, and the Naturalist, having engaged a car, set off from the Peacock to see the far-famed Palace of the Peak, and the fairy land called up by the magic wand of Paxton. Andrew anticipated no little pleasure in beholding the Victoria Regia, growing in its "tropical region beneath a glass sky," the cascades, waterworks, fountains, and velvet lawns, as Alexis did in seeing the exquisite carvings in wood, by Gibbons, the rosary of Henry VIII., and the choice paintings and sculpture, more especially "The Monks at Prayer," and Landseer's picture of "Bolton Abbey." The three friends were journeying jauntily along, when a remarkable object caught the eye of the Naturalist, and he turned to the driver and asked, "What is that beautiful object which appears amidst yon dark woods like a great column of crystal?"

"That sir, is the great hemperer fountain at Chatsworth. It spouts up to no hend ef a ight, sir."

"Oh! oh!" ejaculated the interrogator—"but I suppose we shall see more of it when we have rounded the hill.

Alec., look at that gipsy tent. Is it not pretty, with the cattle loitering about, and the damsels washing at the brook?"

"Worthy of the pencil of gipsy-painter Oakley. They seem a vagabond race, those gipsies, Nat. Industry is evidently not one of their failings. They have a fixed aversion to agriculture, and are not very deeply enamoured of any kind of work. What is their origin? Egyptian?"

"No! rather Hindoostani. This I know to be the opinion of one as well up in all that appertains to India as anyone outside the walls of Addiscomb. He is an excellent Oriental scholar, and he tells me, that amongst the gipsies, are the remains of a language (peculiar to themselves,) in which are traces of Sanscrit. Sir David Baird, too, was remarkably struck with the resemblance of some of the Sepoys to the English gipsies. They are evidently not the dregs of any people. The countenances of many of the females are beautiful, as those of the males are manly."

"The swallows fly low over the river, Nat.; I fear we shall have rain."

"It is a singular fact, Andrew, but quite true, that a knowledge of this habit of the swallow is as old as the hills. Aratus describes it, and several of the Latin poets have imitated him, as in the following lines:—

*'Aut arguta lacus circumvolitavit hirundo,
Et veterem in limo ranæ cecinere querelam.'*"

"Then you like Virgil, Nat.?"

"My favourite author. His allusions to rural life and

objects are so pretty : as when he notices the frogs croaking in the pool—the fair weather after rain. Then, too, how true are his descriptions of the habits of rooks, especially their favourite custom of returning in the evening to their roosting trees—of ants laying up their eggs in the nests—and birds drying their plumage, and solacing themselves in the sun.”

“I prefer Claudian. He has much of the polished elegance of Virgil, and something more. How exquisite is his description of the Roman husbandman, a simple-minded peasant, which Alford, now Dean of Canterbury, has rendered into English ; I mean that part where he represents the peasant ‘as telling the fortunes of his cottage in the house that held him in childhood. Fortune had thrown him into no tumults ; his lips had touched no rivers but his own. He never mingled in the jars of the forum ; unknown was he to men and to the city. His daily sky was clear and unlimited ; he measured his time by crops, not consuls ; the fall by its fruits ; the prime by its flowers ; who knew the oak and acorn ; at whose side laboured his third descendants, and who lived the happiest who had the most of life.”

“Exquisite in its way, Andrew ; still, I like Virgil, although my introduction to him was rather peculiar, of its kind. In my school-days I belonged to a very peculiar genus. I could never travel any road but that which led to a scrape. Of that little band of boy-soldiers, which were ever alert to storm the fortress of mischief, I must always head the ‘forlorn hope.’ But time, Andrew—time has a wonderfully subduing influence. A lad may be a very Cruiser, but Time will be his Rarey. Well ! I was at

school, situated in the Melton country. Lord Southampton was King of the Quorn. The hounds came near the playground one day—their music was irresistible—off I went. Usher and books were forgotten. I trotted with the hounds on foot, from wood to wood, and at last, tired out, came back to school; and a pretty reception I had—a yard of cane, and fifty lines of Virgil, text and construction too.”

“You were a very Peregrine Pickle, Nat.”

“I was; but at last I got checkmated by a miller. He took all the wind out of my sails.”

“How?”

“A couple of friends and myself were rambling over the country, when we came to a windmill. The wheel was spinning round—whiz! whiz! whiz!—twenty rounds to the minute, and turning another little wheel on the side of the mill, which was going at the same rate. It became the object of our ambition to lodge a flint stone in this little wheel. It was my lot to accomplish this feat and subject myself to the miller’s wrath at the same time; out he rushed from the mill. I made my escape, and ran for a couple of miles, he in hot pursuit, and, just as I was dashing through a considerable brook, I felt my pursuer’s hand upon my shoulder. Escape was vain. The miller vowed vengeance, and executed it too. But he did not tell my master; he did not thrash me; but what think you, Andrew, he did do? He took me to his mill, got a flour-bag, and dusted me as white as a sheet! But, Andrew, look at that bird climbing up yon tree—I mean that tree just by the wood side.”

“A lovely creature! What do you call it, Nat? Its plumage is worthy of the tropics—black, white, and scarlet

on the head ; wings black, barred, as it were with white, with scarlet on the rump."

"It is the greater spotted woodpecker, Andrew ; *Picus major*."

"Do you know anything of its habits?"

"Yes ; and they are interesting, as its plumage is remarkable. It forms one of that remarkable group of the feathered tribes of which, perhaps, the green woodpecker is the most common and best known. Loving woods, woodlands, parks, and copses, this bird is rather locally distributed. He selects such spots as are favourable to his arboreal habits. In the southern division of my own county (Derby) it cannot be called rare, and many instances of its breeding in the larger woods have come to my knowledge. In winter it frequently ventures into the more open parts of the country, and, attracting notice by the marked appearance of its plumage, becomes the prize of the gunner. The male is particularly handsome. Its food consists principally of insects, especially woodlice, which are found in the bark of trees, and which the bird brings within its reach by rapping his bill smartly against the bark. The 'rat-tat-tat' may be heard a quarter of a mile off on a frosty morning. I have little doubt that this woodpecker builds twice in a season, and probably it is owing to this circumstance that the species escapes annihilation—harassed, as it is, by numerous enemies."

"Nat., how do they build their nest, and where?"

"I have known nests found so early as the third week in March, and as late as the last week in June. Occasionally, a nest is found in the Derbyshire woods. In a large wood, called Gorstalees, near Ingleby, on the estate of Sir Robert Burdett, Bart., these birds occasionally built. The most

interesting pair built in a hole in a beech tree, about twelve feet from the ground; decayed wood formed the nest. When the eggs were laid I could not ascertain; but the young were hatched about the beginning of June. During the second week in the month they were continually seen at the mouth of the nest hole, first one and then the other, putting out their beaks and making a loud noise, which might be heard at a distance of sixty yards. This seemed to be a note of invitation to the parents to visit them. The office of feeding the young devolved chiefly upon the female, the male being shy and rarely to be seen. The nest, when examined, cut a sorry figure. Instead of having that beautiful cleanliness which marks the nests of many birds, theirs was a most pestiferous domicile—a miniature Augean stable—so much so, that maggots had actually been bred in it, and were crawling amongst the young birds, whose rich and beautiful plumage was soiled with filth. Their tail feathers and those of the adult female, were in the most filthy condition. The young consisted of three birds—a male and two females. The females had much less of the rich scarlet on their forehead and under tail coverts than the male. At the period when the young leave the nest their plumage much resembles that of the old birds, but the markings are rather less distinct. They are fully fledged about June 20. This woodpecker is particularly fond of *fallen trees*. I have seen trees which had been cut down and piled into lots visited by them daily. They were very amusing in their habits. They came to the trees, placed their heads downwards, and commenced pecking away at the bark; piece by piece fell beneath their bills, as chips from the axe of a woodman. Being curious to ascertain what they were in

search of, I made a minute examination, and found that it was a small white grub which lay at intervals embedded in the bark. Their sagacity in finding out those spots containing the most grubs was very remarkable. Upon shelling off some bark where the birds were at work, I found nearly thirty grubs in nine square inches; but, upon shelling off another portion from the same tree which the birds had not touched, no insect was visible. In both cases the surface of the bark presented the same appearance. During one day a bird chipped off a piece of bark thirty inches in length—an industrious little woodman! Even during the winter the bird contrives to find out grubs. I once saw one shot in the month of February, with a white one, about an inch long, sticking in his throat.”

“But how does he manage to procure them?” said Andrew.

“You may remember that when describing the toad, I alluded to the beautiful instances of ‘contrivance’ found among animated beings. In this woodpecker is visible another of these wonderful instances. The bird, as I have said, lives chiefly upon insects, which are procured from the bark of trees. In order to enable him the more readily to procure them, he is gifted by nature with strong hooked claws, which, aided as they are by the stiff feathers of the tail, enable the bird to climb very readily the bole of a tree. His beak is strong, somewhat angular and pointed; with this he digs into the bark for insects, and, having found them, then the tongue comes into operation. This is beautifully formed. Being flexible in character, it can be darted out nearly half an inch beyond the tip of the beak, and thus be inserted into the most minute crevices in pursuit

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of prey. That prey being found, it is transfixed by the tongue, which is barbed and serrated, and by it drawn into the mouth. When at rest the tongue fits compactly within the lower mandible of the beak."

"Thank you," said Andrew, "for the information. The history of the bird is singular; it is another illustration, I perceive, of the wisdom of God as displayed in his 'creation.'"





CHAPTER V.

THE TRIP TO CHATSWORTH—THE HONEY-BEE—FALLOW DEER
—RED DEER—DEER'S HORNS—THE PEREGRINE FALCON
—FALCONRY IN THE OLDEN TIME.

AFTER a ride of four or five miles through the delightful scenery of the Peak, the three friends arrived at the park-gate leading to the domain of Chatsworth. Pleasant converse upon various subjects had rendered their journey very short, and, in order to enjoy more fully their little trip, they determined to lengthen it by leaving the vehicle and walking leisurely through the park. Naturalist had scarcely stepped from the carriage when his eye—ever alert after his favourite pursuit—alighted upon a solitary thistle.

“Andrew,” said he, “I don’t know why it is, but few sights afford me more real pleasure than to see a bee sitting upon a bloom.”

“Few are more pretty,” said the poet. “He is the ‘pilgrim of a thousand shrines’—so some one expresses it.”

“If the bee is a pilgrim, Andrew, this thistle is its Mecca. See! already there are six at their devotions.”

“Beautiful beings!” said Andrew, “and suggestive of many thoughts. Nat., I have heard it said, that if a bee visits a flower, he never goes to it a second time; and that

upon coming to a bloom, if he finds another bee has been before him, he immediately leaves it and flies away to another. What say you?"

"I do not think it does so, Andrew. Only a few mornings ago I experimented upon this very subject, and this I found to be the case. If twenty blooms existed on a plant, the same bee never examined the same bloom twice; but if she had visited one, and *immediately* afterwards it was visited by a second, the latter usually just alighted on the bloom, reconnoitered a little, then gave a dissatisfied buzz, and hastily left for another; but if that bloom remained some time—say a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes—before a bee came, she stayed some time, apparently extracting the honey. Whilst talking of bees, I may observe that a friend of mine writes me word that he has frequently watched them collect the honey and pollen from the monopetalous flowers of the common comfrey. Those which had the pollen mass on their legs went inside the flowers where the pollen was to be found, while the bees which had no pollen invariably pierced the flowers outside, near to their insertion on the calix, where the honey is situated. The holes thus pierced served afterwards for every comer. They may easily be found, as the parts around the perforation become discoloured. He never saw a bee with pollen upon its legs resort to the holes on the outside, nor one without pollen enter the tube of the corolla."

"It has often been a miracle to me, Nat., how a bee contrives to extract nutritious honey from poisonous flowers."

"But does it always do this, Andrew? Remember you not how Xenophon relates of the famous 'ten thousand' that, in their approach towards Trebisond, they found honey,

of which they ate, whereupon some seemed like men intoxicated, and others as if in the agonies of death? None actually died, perhaps; but some deleterious quality in the honey acted most injuriously even upon their vigorous constitutions."

"Have you any idea, Nat., what quantity of honey it is possible for a single hive to collect—say in a day, a week, or a season?"

"That, of course, Andrew, must depend much upon season and locality. The scarcity and abundance of flowers have a marked influence upon the result of their labours; but in localities where bean fields were numerous and blossomed well, and lime trees prevailed, I have known a hive to gather more than 23lb. in less than a month. But look, Andrew! What a group of deer!"

"How beautiful they look!" said the poet; "they seem fit denizens of park or forest. One cannot tell why it is, but a deer would look as much out of place in a meadow as a cow in a forest. Elegant creatures! Observe the twinkle of their innumerable tails, and the tossing to and fro of their antlers! What an aristocratic air they have! I suppose, Nat., that nature having given them those horns once, they are horned for ever?"

"If you mean, Andrew, that the same horns remain upon them as long as they exist, it is a mistake. The history of those horns is curious. The first year they bud forth and attain a certain size and have a beautiful velvety appearance. They then drop off and are renewed, but of a larger size than that of the preceding year. The buck, I believe, always has horns; the doe occasionally. When young, the horn is extremely sensitive, and if a blow is given to it causes

great pain to the animal; but when the horn has arrived at its full growth, the sensitiveness declines, the blood vessels diminish in size, until no blood is conveyed to the velvet, which then dies and peels off. The large deer you see are red deer, of the same kind as the coveted prize of the Highland stalker. In the autumn they are often very pugnacious, especially when depastured, as these are in parks, not only fighting furiously among themselves, but even attacking human beings. They then make a deep loud grunting, a bellowing noise which echoes through the woods and may be heard a long distance. This noise is made in the autumn, and in my mind is ever associated with the sighing wind and the fading wood. It seems the first grand trumpet-note of winter. Still I love to hear it. Nor is this taste singular. It is said of the Wortleys that 'they built a lone ledge on Wharncliffe, unto which they might resort to hear the wild bucks bell.' That was in the good old days of greyhounds and falconry."

"Falconry! Nat., you remember Shakspeare's expression about not knowing 'a hawk from a hand-saw.' Depend upon it the word should be 'hernshaw.' Certainly; a young heron. But consult 'Peregrine.' How do you like his letters on 'Falconry?'"

"Much. He pursues his subject strong of wing, and you see, when tired with long flight, alights occasionally on the summit of Parnassus, or dips his quill in the Castalian spring. Had I read him years ago, I should probably now have possessed one of the finest falcons that ever struck quarry; but I lost him through having an imperfect knowledge of the art of training him. He was a splendid fellow—a peregrine."

"How did you get him, Nat.?"

"In a manner rather singular. He was captured in Derbyshire. Some persons heard a most vociferous chattering amongst the jays in a large wood, and upon going up to the spot found, to their surprise, that a noble falcon had struck a carrion-crow, and had clutched his prey with such force that he could not extricate his talons, which led to his capture. He fell into the hands of a gentleman who preferred fish to fowl, and, knowing my amiable weakness for the feathered tribes, presented him to me, with the polite request that I would take all possible care of him. It was an evil day for thrush and sparrow when Mr. Peregrine first set foot upon my domain. Having him, of course he must be fed; and loving falconry, I set about the office of training him, without even knowing a jess from a ruffer-hood. Fifteen hundred individuals of the feathered race did he consume in one year; and even then I was obliged to vary his rations with flesh. He was rather epicurean, too, in his taste. He liked his bird fresh killed, and with the blood still warm. He easily devoured a blackbird at a meal, and required to keep him in condition three such meals a day. If you gave him a bird he seized it eagerly, ripped it piecemeal, and down went bones, flesh, feathers, and entrails without distinction. The head was his choice morsel. The stomach had the power of separating the digestible parts from the bones and feathers, and the latter were reproduced in castings or pellats. In my rude way—not, however, unlike that described by 'Peregrine'—I trained him so far as to be able to take larks on one or two occasions, and I was not a little surprised to find how dexterously he could strike down so small a bird. One day, however, thinking I would

give him a wider field, I unloosed him at a crow. He rose on majestic wing, circle above circle, until he towered above his quarry, when a second falcon hove in sight, and they voyaged away together."

"Nat," said Alexis, "when examining old documents, I have often been struck with the immense importance the falconers of old attached to their hawks. Why, a 'cast' of hawks would fetch as much then, as a couple of racers now, aye, of the best blood in England. Only think of fifteen hundred pounds for a couple of hawks! King John was remarkably fond of falconry. The welfare of his hawks was evidently his first consideration, that of his kingdom the second. Some years ago I had occasion to look over the Patent and Close Rolls of that monarch, and in the latter, which might be called his private letters, which were addressed principally to the sheriffs of towns, he commands them to mew his hawks and feed his hounds. I will just recite to you one of his letters. 'We send to you, Thomas de Weston, with our two girefalcons, namely, Blakeman and the foolish falcon, and with three greyhounds, and Hawkinus de Havvill with Le Refuse, our girefalcon and two greyhounds, commanding you to let our aforesaid girefalcons be mewed and well kept, and to find necessities for the aforesaid Thomas, with one horse and his groom, and the aforesaid Hawkinus with one horse and his groom, during their stay with you, and it shall be accounted you at the exchequer.'" Another letter runs thus: "Giibert de Hauvill is commanded to let Le Refuse, the king's girefalcon, which is under the care of Ralph de Hauvill, fly with Blakeman, the king's girefalcon, which is under his care, and pay such dilligent attention thereto as to merit

the king's thanks." In the Close Rolls referred to, are hundreds of such letters, but being written in a kind of Norman Latin, and having the words most curiously abbreviated, it requires the attainments of the classic, as well as the patience of the antiquary to construe them."

"And when disinterred from the literary cemetery of ages, of what value are they?" said Andrew. "Alex., you are so fond of antiquity. Let the old wizard rest in his coffin; brush not the dust from his dry bones! Let us have a subject less dry, stale, and unprofitable."

"Andrew," said Nat, "if I read aright, falconry, though of ancient birth, was anything but unprofitable. It was the favourite pastime of an age full of chivalry and romance. To say nothing of the pretty sight of seeing the young heiress of the neighbouring castle set out upon her ambling palfry, with her falconer and merlins, there were other circumstances that made the sport most agreeable and bewitching. You see, Andrew, if human tastes have changed since then, the human heart has not. The latter is still influenced by passion and affection; and as some modern belle at some grand archery *fete* may have other arrows to shoot than those which hit the gold, so the 'faire ladie' of olden time had other birds to fly than those she called her falcons. And the gentlemen too, they were frequently indebted to falconry for the possession of many a charming household treasure. Sir Nigel might 'come pretending to see his neighbour's hawks fly, but in reality to see his sisters.'"

"Yes, yes," said Alexis, "the knights of old could have told many a charming story connected with some bright eye that glanced beneath a hawking hat."



CHAPTER VI.

CHATSWORTH PARK—HOUSE—OLD FAMILIES AND TREES—
OLD PARKS AND OAKS—THE VILLAGE OF EDENSOR.

AFTER sauntering leisurely through the park of Chatsworth, and discoursing pleasantly upon any subject that suggested itself, the trio beheld the mansion standing out in bright relief against a mass of dark woods, before which were playing, in all their beauty, cascades and rippling fountains.

“Princely place, this,” said Andrew; “it may well be called the ‘Palace of the Peak.’”

“It well merits the title,” said Alexis; “and independently of its grandeur, it has much to interest. It was built by the celebrated ‘Bess of Hardwick,’ who married three husbands, and by each acquired a higher altitude of wealth and station. Here Hobbes wrote his ‘Leviathan,’ and here it was that St. Evremond found the great philosopher, as he graphically describes it, ‘involved like Jupiter in clouds of his own raising, and entrenched behind a battery of ten or twelve guns, charged with a stinking combustible called *tobacco*.’ Here the various Dukes of Devonshire have collected all that is beautiful in art, and valuable in literature, and dispensed those princely hospitalities to royalty, and

nobility, which have ever distinguished their honourable house. And here, I believe, spent much of his time the 'richest of all the learned, as well as the most learned of all the rich,' the renowned philosopher, Henry Cavendish, who discovered the constituent elements of water. And it is said, too, that the present Duke inherits similar tastes, and, if I remember rightly, shone conspicuously in his year at Cambridge."

"Old families, like old trees," said Nat., "are not the growth of this nor that generation. I like to see them firmly anchored to the soil. They have both survived the elemental shocks that have broken round their heads, and stand out as significant monuments, with one branch pointing to the future, another to the past. When reading the eventful history of some noble family, I often think that if the great have their great pleasures, they have proportionate sorrows; if some flowers, yet many thorns. They frequently lack the peace that nestles beneath their castle-towers. The lightning that shivers the great forest oak passes harmlessly over the wild flower it overshadows. Let the great give me the privilege of seeing occasionally their castles and their parks, their outlying woodlands, and the thousand animated beings with which they are peopled—let me see the early primrose burst forth beneath the hazels in their woods, or hear the blithe bird singing upon their boughs—and I envy not their possessor his possessions, though his acres are as green as the leaves of the forest, and countless as the sands of the ocean."

"Nor I, Nat. But really it is delightful to have the privilege of rambling over a park like this, with trees waving in unrestrained luxuriance, and the deer herding in groups

beneath, or dotted singly along the sides of the slopes, or ranging along the valleys."

"Yes," said the Naturalist; "but I prefer a really old park—one of those grey domains which you occasionally see, forming as it were an island of forest, amidst a sea of cultivation. They have formed perhaps part of the primeval forest of our country, ere the Roman eagle was planted upon its soil, or the sturdy Norman had cut it into fragments. I love to see their oaks gnarled and grey, writhed and twisted into every picturesque shape—hollow in the bole and stag's-horned at the summit—whose half-barkless branches seem to tell you mutely that under them browsed the stag a thousand years ago. In fancy's ear I hear them say, 'We have stood here, silent spectators of scenes and events, whilst a hundred battles have been fought, and crowns nodded to their fall. We were coeval with, if we did not exist previously to, a period when King John signed Magna Charta. Perhaps the Henries hunted beneath our shade. Since we were acorns, a hundred kings have been crowned and buried. The mitred abbot and cowed monk have existed in all their glory, and built noble monasteries and abbeys, whose orisons and anthems have died away, and in whose cloisters the swallow now builds and the spider spins her silk. We have heard the bittern boom where harvests wave. We have seen agriculture tread stealthily on the marsh, or climb boldly up the hill. We have seen commerce expand her white wings and overspread the earth. In a word, we have stood here whilst season after season has gilded our crowns with sunshine, or whitened them with snows—whilst this kingdom has gradually passed through a series of successive ages, from the barbarism of an ignorant, to the refinement of a polished age.'"

“ True, my taste with reference to old parks is precisely yours, Nat.”

“ Yes !” said the Naturalist, “ give me such old domains as Donnington in Leicestershire, or rare old Bradgate, in the which the friends of the ‘ ten days’ Queen’ were hunting when Roger Ascham found her reading the ‘ Phædo’ of Plato. Those are parks, whether considered in reference to their appearance or the associations connected with them. Everything is old, everything is grey. Their oaks—venerable in their decay—belong to the very aristocracy of oaks. Their ferns have a peculiarly ancient look, as if the dappled deer had nibbled them for ages ; and the dead, bare branches that have fallen beneath the trees, lie so thick, and are so decayed, that they seem to be the accumulations which a thousand angry winds have shaken down for centuries. The brown, sere leaves lie in mouldering heaps, where the autumn winds have left them, which ever and anon are rustled by the wind, or by the foot of some little animated being that is stepping over them. The daws—ever querulous and noisy—dart from the bare summit of the oaks, take a few eccentric circles upwards, and again alight. The sound of the woodpecker’s laugh rings in the distance, and that agile labourer, the blithe squirrel, flings himself from tree to tree in his efforts to gather food for his wintry store. Herds of beautiful fallow deer rest on their couch of leaves. A solitary red deer bounds away amongst the oaks, or stands majestically beneath some fine spreading elm. Such is the character of an old English park in the season of winter. How glorious is it in the autumn ! Then the woods are in all their glory ; then their glowing tints contrast admirably with the sober colouring of many of the

objects with which they are associated. The yellow colour of the birch, the orange of the elm, the deep red of the beech, the russet-brown of the sycamore, contrast finely with the darkness of the yew, or the deep green of the firs and pines. There is, too, something peculiarly impressive in the contemplation of woodlands at this period. Their sublimity gives rise to meditation, and their silence—broken only by the cries of a few wild beings—gives a grateful pleasure to the spirit. If an old park, with its attendant woods, lawns, and oaks, has many attractions in the autumn, they are equally numerous in the spring. It is delightful to note the manner in which awakening Nature throws off her winter chrysalis case, and appears in the new and beautiful hues of unfolding spring. The fern pushes up its russet scrolls; the primrose blossoms in thick clusters at some old trees' roots; the early violet, ever welcome in its season, crushed beneath the wild deer's foot, breathes forth delicious odours; whilst a hundred early birds are singing so intently from every bush and brae, that their little bosoms seem bursting with music. Then, how delightful is it to witness the silent unfolding of verdure, as leaf after leaf appears upon bush and forest tree."

"Good!" remarked the poet. "But see, Nat, what a lovely villa is before us, half shaded by spreading trees. How pretty and rural is its situation, and the scene, how busy! No less than sixteen carriages are standing before the door, and grooms and waiting-men constantly plying about. Then look at that little village in the distance—each house is picturesque as an Alpine cottage."

"That is the village of Edensor, Andrew. It is situated within the precincts of Chatsworth Park. No two of its

cottages are architecturally alike, and, half screened as they are by forest timber, and sheltered by lofty hills, and situated within their lovely little gardens, make the scene truly Arcadian. And the house which first attracted your attention is the Edensor Inn, built for the accommodation of tourists like ourselves; and those carriages have simply halted before its door, while their gay groups of visitors have walked a few hundred yards to see the house at Chatsworth. And we will halt there too, and follow their good example, and, having seen all that the house contains, repair hither again, and, whilst resting beneath Mr. Jepson's roof, enjoy the dinner and choice wine which he will provide for us—moderately, Andrew."

"Yes, moderately, ever remembering the poet's sage remark, '*In medio tutissimus ibis*.'"

Andrew had scarcely closed his observation when the party arrived at the door of the Edensor Inn; here they alighted, left their carriage, and walked up to Chatsworth House. It is not our intention to follow the tourists in their peregrinations over the house and grounds; their magnificent and attractive character have been too often portrayed in "Gem of the Peak," *Gazeteer*, or *Guide-Book* to render a description necessary from us. Suffice it to say, that the trio saw all that was to be seen—the palace, with its rare paintings, choice sculpture, and remarkable wood carving, so graphically described by Horace Walpole, its rich corridors and stately rooms, where nobles and warriors have sat, and crowned heads banqueted—the grounds, with their curious rockeries, bright fountains, and grand conservatories filled with all choice plants that botanical enterprise could gather and botanical skill cause to flourish; and,

having been highly gratified with their visit, returned to the Edensor Inn. Dinner being over, the trio betook themselves to "a quiet weed," and as the wreathes curled gracefully upward, fell into a train of conversation suggested by a very trivial circumstance.





CHAPTER VII.

THE EDENSOR INN—CONVERSATION ABOUT THE HOUSE-FLY
—SCENERY NEAR BAKEWELL—RETURN TO THE PEACOCK
—“CHANTREY’S WOODCOCKS”—THE LESSER REDPOLE,
ITS FAMILIARITY, ETC. — FIELD NATURAL HISTORY —
WHITE’S HISTORY OF SELBORNE.

WHEN we last left the three friends they were enjoying their *otium cum dignitate* at the Edensor Inn, on the borders of Chatsworth Park, and blowing a mild Havannah in a room commanding as pretty a view as ever lent a charm to the Peak of Derbyshire. Andrew was looking towards the window and enjoying the delicious scene, when his eye was arrested by the motions of a house-fly running lightly up the window.

“Naturalist,” said he, “there is no insect in creation that amuses me more than the common house-fly. His coolness and impertinence are remarkable, and yet he is a clever little fellow withal. Suppose you are sitting at your tea, just mark how lightly he drops upon your sugar, and just when you are about to annihilate him for his audacity, lo! up he flies, and probably settles upon the very tip of your chin. He is an entomological harlequin in his movements; indeed, few rope-dancers could do such clever tricks as he.

Suppose Astley or Hengler were to announce to the world that, on a particular day some clever German or elastic Arab would walk up the exterior of St. Paul's, or on the ceiling of one of the rooms of the Royal Exchange ; why, half the metropolis would assemble to witness such a curious spectacle. Yet the little fly performs an equally curious feat in our own houses daily. He can traverse the ceiling of a room, or glide up a window-pane ; whether it be in a perpendicular, horizontal, or lateral direction, it matters not to him. How can he possibly make his feet stick to the pane ; you see it is as polished as ivory ?”

“ You are a somewhat shrewd observer, Andrew ; your questions are not so easily answered as you suppose. Nevertheless, I think I can satisfy you. It might be imagined that as the fly attempted to run along the ceiling of a room, the weight of its own body would bring it down. Why does it not ? Several ingenious theories have been given upon the subject by learned men ; but, perhaps, that of Sir Edward Home is nearest the truth. The fly's feet are furnished with suckers, which, when applied closely to the plane of position, expel the air to an extent sufficiently great to produce the pressure necessary to keep the insect from falling.”

“ Nat., there is another question which has often puzzled me. In summer flies abound by thousands. They loiter about flowers, perch upon fruit, and enter houses, and buzz about windows, or continually accompany horses, and tease them about the ears. But in winter, a fly is as rare as a swallow. You say the swallow migrates ; does the fly migrate, too ?”

“ Not usually, Andrew ; the great bulk of them hybernate or go into a deep sleep. As the cold increases towards

autumn, they frequently creep into unoccupied rooms, lay themselves up behind picture-frames, or in the folds of curtains; their bodies become torpid, like those of the bat or hedgehog, and they sleep away the winter awaiting the return of spring. With the April sunshine they again awake, their bodies resume their functions, and life and activity prevail."

"That accounts for a little circumstance which occurred in my house the other day. My housemaid was airing an unoccupied room, and the flies came tumbling out of the window-curtains, and lay by dozens near the window, in a kind of half-mesmerised, half-wakeful state, as if Nature was wishful to rouse them into a living state, but didn't precisely know how."

"Yes! they had lain torpid until the fire was put into the room. It then acted upon them like the sun of spring, and roused them into activity. In very warm rooms, the house-fly will be about all the winter. The atmosphere is not sufficiently cold to induce torpidity."

"Then they never migrate, Nat.?"

"Sometimes, but not periodically like birds. Immense flights occasionally cross the British Channel, but the cause of their migration is rather obscure. I once witnessed an attempt of a flight to cross when sailing between St. Margaret's Bay and Calais. We fell in with one which had left France, and tried to gain the English coast, but failed. The great bulk of it consisted of the common house-fly, with a few of the yellow and white butterflies. They lay floating dead upon the sea by myriads, whilst we sailed through their lifeless bodies for miles. We first met with them about four miles from Calais. It seemed as if myriads, almost count-

less, had congregated upon the coast like swallows, tried to cross the Channel, and failed."

"If you remember, Nat., Herodotus mentions a circumstance about flies, but it seems so marvellous that doubtless he a little embroidered the truth. He positively states—and he is speaking of a period 2,000 years ago—that the Egyptian fishermen, in order to be protected from mosquitoes, covered themselves with their fish-nets. One would think that either the mosquitoes must be enormously large, or the meshes of the nets remarkably small, for this to be a fact.

"The circumstance is less figured with embroidery than you think," said the Naturalist. "Scientific men have stated the same thing of the house-fly even twenty centuries after the great father of history was sealed in his sarcophagus. I have no doubt the circumstance is as truthfully recorded as his narration of historical events. Indeed, Dr. Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, an excellent naturalist, observed that by extending on the outside of his windows nets of a very fine pack thread with meshes $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the square, so fine and comparatively invisible that there was no apparent diminution either of light or the distant view, he was enabled for the remainder of the summer and autumn to enjoy the fresh air with open windows without the annoyance he had previously experienced from the intrusion of flies, often so troublesome that he was obliged on the hottest days to forego the luxury of admitting the air by even partially raising the sashes; but no sooner had he set his nets than he was relieved from his disagreeable visitors. He could perceive and hear them hovering on the other side of the barrier, but though now and then they settled on the meshes, he did not recollect a single instance of one crossing the boundary."

"A secret worth knowing," said Alexis.

The conversation being finished, the little party left the Edensor Inn, and determined to vary their route to the Peacock by way of Bakewell. They passed through a country fine and picturesque, but where might be seen the successful "pursuit" of farming "under difficulties;" where existed farms whose "chronicles," if written, might vie in interest with that described so vividly in "Talpa." Amidst hills, round whose brows, even sometimes in May, the frost twines his wreaths instead of Flora her flowers, agriculture has scattered her Leicesters and Durhams, and amidst cold winds and stone walls, are annually produced as rich saddles and sirloins as ever, in these days, smoked upon the board of a baron.

The scenery, however, along their route was charming; and, as they neared the neat old town of Bakewell, its lovely church-spire rose conspicuously over house and tree, and gave the crowning feature to the landscape. The travellers now entered the lovely valley of the Wye—a river born of heath-crowned hills, which comes laughing and dancing through the dales of the Peak, and by the grey old towers of Haddon, until it arrives—as did our travellers—at the lovely village of Rowsley; there it joins the stately Derwent, and the bridal rivers speed on their course in a united stream through the dale of Darley.

"Welcome again the Peacock," said Andrew; "once more let us shelter ourselves beneath its grey walls and quaint gables. 'Tis an old house, this, Nat.! Look at that stone figure of a peacock over the door, and the date. 'Twas cut by some shrewd village Audubon, I'll warrant."

"Or rather Chantrey," said the Naturalist, "for, however

successful Audubon was in the pursuit of natural history, he never wrought with the chisel ; whereas, Chantrey, although a first-rate sculptor, had a good knowledge of birds, and well knew how to carve them. Witness his little production—the two woodcocks which were killed at one shot, and about which so many couplets have been written.”

“Yes,” said Andrew, “and amongst them the following by Hudson Gurney :—

‘Driven from northern climes, which would have starved them,
Chantrey first shot—and then he carved them.’

But come, let us enter the house, seek out our old room, and talk over the events of the day—or something better. Nat., you seem to be upon friendly terms with all living things ; for once I’m determined to puzzle you.”

“Proceed,” said the Naturalist, “and if you succeed, I’ll present you with as fine a brace of grayling as ever sprang at a Mayfly.”

“Agreed,” said the poet. “You must know then, that a few winters ago, a friend and myself were rambling by the brink of the very Derwent that runs near this house, but nearer to its junction with the Trent. Its banks were fringed with alders ; and my friend turned to me in surprise, and said, ‘Look ! what a multitude of birds. How they cling and cluster, like honey-bees upon the alder-boughs ! What lively little fellows—now under, now over the boughs, they glide ; now hanging upon the catkins—now flitting amongst the leaves ! What birds can they be ?’”

“Redpoles you should have said.”

“Redpoles,” said Andrew, “what are they ?”

“A species of linnet, rather locally distributed—in some districts very rare.”

"Most amusing fellows," said the poet. "Little feathered harlequins, performing all kinds of grotesque feats. I could have watched them for hours."

"And did you watch them?" asked the Naturalist.

"No; but we shot into the middle of the whole party, just to kill one or two, to give me the opportunity of examining them more closely. Bang! went my gun, and down fell seven. And what do you think, Nat? the rest were not the least disturbed, but fed on with all the composure imaginable, and as if the report of a dozen guns would not frighten them from the picking of a single seed. 'The pert rascals,' said my friend, 'I never saw anything to equal their audacity. Their coolness is most provoking; although the report of your gun was sufficiently loud to have scared the whole ten thousand of them, not a bird thought it worth his while to leave a single twig. But I'll have a shot that will startle them from their propriety.' Bang! went his gun—three fell dead. Result the same."

"No wonder their tameness astonished you," said the Naturalist; "I have shot amongst thousands of them with a like result, and I can tell you, my friend, that even during the nesting season they exhibit the same familiarity. I once had the good fortune to witness a pair of these birds which were busy in building their nest, and I observed them from its very commencement. It was in Derbyshire, where the bird is not usually met with in the summer. And the nest was situated at the top of a low hedge, in some meadows lying low, near the Trent. The sprays upon which it was built, were covered with lichens of grey and yellow, and the birds had the tact to ornament their nest with those of

the same colour. The exterior was composed of moss and a little wool; the interior was made deliciously soft with the cotton-like seeds of some wild plant, and then the eggs were laid. But all the time the structure was in progress, the little birds took no notice of an intruder, and I have many times stood within a few yards and watched them constructing the nest; and a pretty sight it was, as they twisted themselves under and over their nest, showing to perfection the red colouring upon their head. This bird is called in some localities, 'The French Linnet.' As the French are remarkable for their gaiety of dress, the birds may be so called because its plumage is gayer than others of the *Fringillidæ*. During the winter, these birds congregate in flocks, leading a vagrant kind of life, roving from one little stream to another, to feed upon the seeds of the alder-bushes. The flocks sometimes consist of thousands. In mild weather, I imagine they frequent more particularly the northern streams, and as severe weather sets in, come down to the southern. I have noticed them in Derbyshire in the greatest numbers in frosts and snows."

"You have won my grayling, Nat.; your account is satisfactory. The birds interested me much, and I longed to meet with a companion like you, who could give me a plain account of them, as, indeed, of any animal, without resorting to science and hard words."

"Despise not science," said the Naturalist; "without science, all would be disorder which now is harmony, although, perhaps, it must be confessed that it has been too much the habit of some writers to husk natural history in a chrysalis case of Latin, rather than exhibit her in the lovely and beautiful hues of a thing of life."

“True,” said the poet; “in my opinion, natural history sketches should be drawn from life—should breathe of the freshness of meadow or moor-land, or convey to the ear the soft breathings of the choristers of the grove. Descriptions should be ‘the express image of nature.’”

“Precisely what a good work on natural history should be. It is its truthfulness of description that has rendered ‘White’s History of Selborne’ one of the most popular books in our language. In its pages you do not simply read of animals, you see them before your eye. You follow the good old parson into the Hanger, and watch the mole throwing up his hillocks; you hear the chiff-chaff ‘utter his two sharp piercing notes, so loud in hollow woods, as to occasion an echo,’ or the woodlark sing poised lightly in mid-air; you see ‘Thomas,’ faithful to his duty, trying various experiments, according to his master’s wishes; you watch the old tortoise in the vicarage garden leading his summer life, and, as winter approaches, prepare to hibernate, as is his wont, beneath the garden-wall. You follow the good old man as he notes from day to day the arrival and departure of migratory birds, how the swallow builds, or how cleverly the creeper climbs up the vicarage-wall. All these things are before you in the good old parson’s book, as if you were on the very spot, and observing and noting them for yourself. And it is this fidelity to nature that contributes to give popularity to the book. And, whilst humanity has a heart to love and admire the various forms of animated nature, this, ‘the express image of it,’ must be read and admired also.”



CHAPTER VIII.

EVENING AT THE PEACOCK—ASHFORD—MONSAL DALE—THE
THE HABITS OF THE DIPPER, ETC.

IT was evening. The vicinity of the Peacock presented an animated scene. A carriage drawn by four splendid greys had just halted before the door, from which was stepping a bevy of ladies, as graceful in their manners, as beautiful in person, whilst numerous disciples of Walton, clad in high boot and tweed jacket, had returned from the neighbouring rivers, and were depositing their rods and creels in the quaint old entrance at the Peacock. The garden, too, had its manifold attractions, where, amongst shrubs and flowers, little groups were sauntering, whilst our friends Andrew, Alexis, and the Naturalist were seated under a spreading tree, engaged in one of those pleasant conversations upon various subjects which constituted so agreeable a charm to their visit to Rowsley.

Since the first day of their meeting at this favourite hostelry they had always been together, and it was agreed on the previous evening that the next day each one should mark

out his own line of amusement : each start in a different direction, return to the Peacock, and describe what objects of interest he had met with, and what incidents had befallen him. Under a spreading lime in the Peacock garden the trio were now met, to report upon the day's proceedings ; pleasant flowers bloomed around them, heightened in beauty by the rays of a setting sun, which shone with peculiar brilliance upon the laburnam's golden hair, whilst the playful Wye seemed to vie with the woodland choir which could send to the ear the most bewitching music.

"And now, friend Naturalist," said Andrew, "tell us your story."

"With all my heart."

"Have you been in search of the ornithological?"

"Perfectly so," said the Naturalist. "Immediately after we separated I rambled up the lovely valley of the Wye, by the grand old towers of Haddon (just halting on the bridge to awaken the echo as I passed), through the town of Bake-well, and on to the little village of Ashford, lying low amongst the hills. Such a lovely spot ! Its cottages are small, but trellised with rose and woodbine ; its church is ancient, and near it a venerable yew. Then its pleasant fields are watered by pleasant streams, for, if I may use the Irishism, Ashford seems a *land of waters*. Its sunny homes, nestling amidst stately trees, render it highly picturesque—one of the most agreeable even of Peak villages. But I soon left Ashford, and rambled on, and on, and on, until I reached Longstone, where I lingered an hour to examine its old church and yew-overshadowed churchyard. Soon I gained Longstone Edge, one of the highest points of the locality, and the scene I sought for was before me—Monsal Dale, in all its placid

beauty, through which the Wye rolled its irregular course, sparkling like silver. That vale hath singular beauty; high mountains frown down upon it in stern defiance, but at their feet are flowers, and trees of gigantic growth and great beauty, waving to and fro, fling their advancing and retreating shadows upon the emerald greensward.

"But having told us where you have been," said Andrew, "pray tell us what you have met with in your rambles."

"Mountain flowers that would have charmed the heart of a Linnaeus, and birds that would have delighted a Yarrell. On the top of a high mountain I found the dottrell, as curious and amusing as naturalists have painted him. Then the ring-ouzel pleased me by his manners. I heard the cuckoo sing amongst the rocks, but its voice seemed to come less pleasant than from the gold-flowered fields. Once, too, the eagle cried above my head; but the little dipper, or water-ouzel, pleased me best."

"Is the dipper," said Andrew, "a rare bird, then, or beautiful in plumage?"

"Neither particularly rare nor beautiful," said the Naturalist, "but one always attractive, owing to the very nature of the scene which it frequents. I met with it first in the Dale of Monsal, in the Wye, perched upon what the country folks call 'a lepping-stone.' It was flying in a direct manner towards me, but, surprised by my presence, seemed to stop short and rest upon the stone, to reconnoitre as it were the scene around, and ascertain the intention of the intruder. The dipper has long had a good deal of interest attached to its history, on account of the various opinions which exist amongst naturalists about the manner in which it dives or walks in the water, and my motive for seeking the bird in

such a spot was that I might possibly have the opportunity of seeing it in the water under the most favourable circumstances, the water of the Derbyshire mountain streams being particularly bright and clear."

"Did you succeed, then?"

"No. By lying still at some distance, I had a good opportunity of seeing the bird exhibit its diving propensities, and very amusing they were. It dropped from the stone on which it was standing into the water, then disappeared beneath it, stayed under a short time, and arose near the spot where it disappeared. These actions were oft repeated; but I was at too great a distance, and the stream was too wide for me to observe by what method the bird progressed."

"For what purpose does the bird dive into the stream? To fish, or for amusement?"

"To procure its food from the bottom of the river," said the Naturalist. "It is said, by those who have seen it in such situations, that it maintains its position under water by considerable exertion, in the same way as the divers and cormorants. It is, however, allied to the thrush and black-bird; but, instead of haunting the field or meadow, loves to dwell by the rippling, sparkling, mountain stream, and may be constantly seen either steering its direct course over the waters, or settled upon a crag. You generally only meet with a solitary bird, or perhaps two, and they are very retiring in their habits."

"I much admire the bird's taste for mountain scenery," said Andrew. "Does it nest in this locality?"

"Certainly; on a picturesque little river, called the Bradford, a few miles hence, near Middleton, I know they

occasionally breed; and I well remember, when a boy, finding a nest and eggs on a rocky stream running by Sydnop, near Darley Dale. The nest is shaped somewhat like that of a wren—deep, large, and woven chiefly of moss, and lined with dry leaves. They are said frequently to build on a mountain stream, behind a waterfall, caused by an obstructing weir or other obstacle. The stream is forced over the weir to some distance, and behind this the nest is built; so that, although the rushing water over-arches it, the nest occupies a dry spot behind. I never found one in such a situation, but have seen several fixed underneath the arch of a rude stone bridge, lodged amongst the stones. I think this is a very favourite situation. The dipper is an early breeder. The eggs are five or six, and white as snow. It has rather a sweet song, yet wild; but, to my ear, just in keeping with its favourite scenery. It does not sing much in spring, but on a cold winter's day its warble is delightful, being amongst the few mountain sounds which, at that period, fall upon the ear. The food consists of various aquatic insects, particularly the caddis-worm and the larvæ of the May-fly."

"An interesting little mountaineer," said Andrew; "I must make his acquaintance."





CHAPTER IX.

THE GOOD DERIVABLE FROM THEIR VISIT—TRUE NOBILITY—
OUR ENGLISH ARISTOCRACY—DERBYSHIRE HEROES—
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE—THE PLEASURE TO BE OBTAINED
FROM THE STUDY OF NATURE—THE FAREWELL.

THE fifth morning after their arrival at Rowsley, found Andrew and the Naturalist quietly seated over their coffee, and conferring about the most agreeable manner of spending the remaining portion of their visit, when suddenly through the open door appeared Alexis, holding in his hand a letter.

"Well! good friend," said Andrew, "what bodeth thy epistle?"

"Not much good for the prolongation of our visit," said Alexis, "I must be off to-morrow."

"Pooh! pooh!" quoth Andrew.

"Yes! yes!" said Alexis. "I must be off to-morrow. Urgent engagements call me home, I cannot neglect them. Time has indeed flown quickly; for

'Lightly falls the foot of Time
That only treads on flowers.'

"Well," said the Naturalist, "then we go too, to return perchance at some not distant period, to resume our pleasant

communings. Our visit," continued he, "has been most singular, yet most delightful. We met as strangers, we part as brothers. And now what has come of our visit?"

"Much," said Andrew. "'Tis something in this locomotive age of ours to leave the World behind—its busy scenes, its hopes and fears, the rattle of its myriad wheels, its hurried minds, its busy hands, ever eager, ever active to take their part in the great battle of life, each striving to reach some favourite goal—'tis something to leave the world behind for a short season, and by the dimpling stream, or amongst the moorland heather, or on the mountain top, to renew our intercourse with nature, and gather, as it were, fresh strength from relaxation and solitude for our future struggles 'along the toiled path of human circumstance.' Then is it not something to have met together—thrown the reign upon the neck of conversation, and let the vagrant steed wander as it would, now nibbling some little sprig or wild-flower in the grassy lane of Natural History, then taking a draught of sweet water from the refreshing rill of Poesy? We have measured our minds together—has not good been the result? Then have we not seen noble palaces and halls, and through them made ourselves acquainted with the rude habits, manners and character of the people of the olden time, as well as with the refinement and polished elegance of those of the modern? We have seen Chatsworth and Haddon, and a host of others, and whilst we wished their possessors long life and happiness, to enjoy their treasured possessions, we have felt grateful that there are hearts by thousands, in this noble land of ours, who esteem it not the least of their numerous privileges that they can administer to the grati-

fiction of others by allowing them to witness their lovely mansions, in which are centred the ancestral treasure of ages."

"Yes!" said Andrew,—

'There are whose hearts are large and frank and loyal,
Whose human nature like their wealth is royal,
In whose free hands, the glittering, dangerous dust
Is not mere money, but a sacred trust—
Long may we keep their pure, untainted line;
Such men are princes, by a right divine.'"

"Princes, indeed," said the Naturalist, "and our country hath many such. Let us be proud of them, and treasure them. I tell you, Andrew, there is no class to which this country is more indebted than its noble-minded, high-spirited aristocracy. They have long wielded immense power, and upon the whole, they have wielded it lightly, and how many of them combine in their own individual persons, the three grand elements of a true aristocracy—birth, talent, and goodness. Then when war calls forth the latent heroism of our country, who are amongst the foremost to lead our band of 'braves' along the glorious path of victory and success? And who are usually amongst the 'unreturning brave?' The scions of noble houses dotted amidst the pleasant parks and grassy meads of England: they, the valour of whose ancestors shone conspicuously at Cressy and Agincourt, at Poitiers and Waterloo. All honour to their names! And I can tell you, Andrew, that braver hearts and firmer feet were never planted upon battle-fields than many who called our own their native county, or were connected with it, but who now, alas! have found a quiet

resting-place upon Crimean soil, or soil as red with blood. Shall I name them, Andrew?"

"Yes! we cannot too oft recall the memory of the brave."

"You, remember, Andrew, when we last met, I told you of a little village called Longstone. Thither received his education one of the noblest hearts that stormed the heights of Alma—the brave Sir William Young, one of her Majesty's 23rd. He died a soldier's death in front of a Russian battery. He had just married his young and very beautiful wife when called upon to embark. He bade her farewell at Southampton. It was their last separation. A few months elapsed and he fell gloriously at Alma.

"Not far hence, too, amongst the pleasant woods of Alderwasley, dwells one whose two brave sons performed prodigies of valour worthy of the Roman Gracchi."

"Their names, Naturalist?"

"The Hurts. Lieutenant Francis Eden Hurt, of the gallant 23rd, and Francis Richard Hurt, of the 34th. The former fell at Inkerman, the latter at the Redan. Then there was the brave Lieutenant Boothby, wounded at the Alma; Bainbrigge, killed in the trenches before Sebastopol; Disbrowe, shot through the lungs at Inkerman; Blane, who served at Inkerman and Alma, and honourably distinguished himself at the siege of Delhi; Clowes, a hero at Balaclava; Holden, who fell at Inkerman; Story, killed in the Baltic; Evans, who served at the siege of Kars; Halliwell, wounded at the Alma; Lowe, who won golden honours at the siege of Delhi; Meynell, who fell gloriously on the banks of the Danube, covered with wounds and glory; Newdigate; Outram, the Indian general; Lieutenant Poole, a young and gallant hero; not forgetting those gallant privates, Gregg

and Humpstone, Wibberly and Jowitt; nor must we silently pass over that patient, yet enduring Christian, who over the stole of the divine, buckled on the armour of the warrior—the soldier-priest Mockler, who nobly fell, waving over the couch of the dying the banner of the Cross. Should not the greatly good be remembered?”

“Yes,” said Andrew, thoughtfully; “and if so, give the laurel leaf to her whose lovely home we have so lately visited, the distinguished heroine of Lea Hurst—the peerless Florence.”

“Good,” said the Naturalist, “I am too much an admirer of her marvellous heroism, her self-denying virtues, ever to forget the name of one who has reflected so much honour upon her country and humanity, and rendered so conspicuous the many noble attributes of her sex. Should we omit the name of Florence Nightingale from our glorious list, we should lack a priceless jewel to give the finishing touch to our heroic circle. The world has had bright women; few like her. In her peculiar walk she stands *per se*. History has recorded the heroism of the Maid of Saragossa, and of Joan of Arc, but it was dictated by a different motive. That of Florence Nightingale was prompted by the wish to contribute to the safety, the welfare, the happiness of her suffering countrymen. She was a female Howard. How unobtrusive, yet how noble was the chivalry of her heroism! There is a chivalry of the social hearth—there is a chivalry of the battle-field. The former is possessed by the wife or the mother, and exists in thousands of British homes. It is destined to be exercised on one or a few individuals, endeared by blood, love, or affection. Miss Nightingale embraced a wider field; it was performed

amongst strangers—persons of the opposite sex—upon a foreign soil, and she was only supported in the execution of it by that ardent love of her noble mission, which annihilated every personal consideration, and extinguished every sentiment but itself. Oh ! when I consider how she left all the comforts, and the pleasures, and conveniences of her native country—how she immured herself amongst sickness within the walls of Scutari—encountered disease—silently performed her heroic deeds—underwent hours of privation and suffering—I am lost in wonder and admiration at the perseverance, the energy, the bravery of this undaunted woman, going forth, unaided, to perform miracles of mercy and deeds, over which the Recording Angel must have smiled as he registered them in the Book of Life !”

“The good have their reward,” said Andrew, “beyond the star or medal. But it seems, Naturalist, that our conversation grows more solemn the nearer our visit is drawing to a close.”

“True,” said Alexis ; “we have shunted to a different line. Let us return to the old point. We were talking of what good had come of our visit, and what good has come of it ?”

“In addition, then, to the results which I previously mentioned, I think may be added this, that we have mutually profited by that peculiar kind of information which each has the good fortune to possess ; I mean that information which each has made it his study to acquire.”

“Yes,” said Andrew, “from Alexis, the antiquary, I have learnt the way how the study of antiquities may be made subservient to illustrate the manners, the habits, the character of bygone ages.”

"And I have learnt," said Alexis, "from Andrew the poet, to see how poetry can be made the pleasing handmaid of pleasure; and that from the pen of Andrew it is in truth what it really ought to be—'thought that is felt;' and we have both," continued Alexis, "learnt from our good friend the Naturalist, to take a delight in every living thing that creepeth upon the face of the earth, or moveth within the bosom of the waters. We have learnt from him that every leaf, every stone, every insect, every bird, every fish, has its own peculiar history—a history replete with curious information, and surrounded with uncommon interest. We have seen that every district is full of animals, each possessing such a history. Armed with a knowledge of natural objects, the naturalist can penetrate into any district of other lands, or any nook of our own, and his favourite objects of study are ever before him. Solitude is unknown to him. He has ever employment for his time, which is not then idly spent. He can say with the poet :—

'There's a harvest of knowledge in all that I see,
Not a leaf or a clod but reminds me of Thee;
There's the magic of music in every sound,
And the aspect of beauty encircles me round.'

"And now, friends, farewell! We have gathered health and wealth of knowledge from the society of each other during our temporary sojourn, and we shall go back to our several homes with renewed strength to combat the trials and difficulties which beset our path. Farewell! 'It may be for years, it may be for ever,' but we hope only for a brief period; and when the chill winds of winter shall whistle around my home, and the hoar frost silver the grey tree with its feathery frost-work, and the snow-flake hangs

were once the roses bloomed, but my little home is lit up with the crackling yule-log, I shall think long and oft of our well-spent visit, and in imagination wander pleasantly along these meads and streams, or enjoy the comforts and homely delights of this quiet hostelry with my friends Andrew and Alexis, and recall vividly to mind those quaint and agreeable conversations which have lent such a peculiar charm to our visit to Rowsley. Once more, friends, farewell !”



